BOOK REVIEWS.

MARCUS AURELIUS AND THE LATER STOICS. By F. W. Bussell, D.D. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910. Pp. xi, 302.

Dr. Bussell's learned and brilliantly able work, closely as it follows the text (all along with exact citations) both of Marcus Aurelius and (on a smaller scale) of his predecessors, Seneca and Epictetus, gives in the end an estimate from a rather special and individual point of view. In the general history both of the Roman Empire and of ethical philosophy, the Stoics are usually treated as marking a stage in the process by which European law and morals were constructed; not, of course, a final stage, but still one that meant positive advance and contributed substantial elements to later codes. Dr. Bussell's aim is to bring out, not these (though he cannot entirely ignore them), but another element which undoubtedly existed, though it was not, as readers might be inclined to think from some of his pages, the whole or almost the whole. This is what he himself occasionally calls the 'Buddhism' of the Stoic Emperor; his stress on abstention, detachment, the worthlessness of life considered in its details, though the world according to his creed is perfect as a whole. And similar positions are brought out in his predecessors. As in Buddhism, the practical result is the duty of universal forgiveness, or more exactly, of passing no judgment on transgressors, who are parts of the whole determined from their own equally valid point of view. Each for himself, if he seeks to live 'according to nature,' as they said in the school, must limit himself to keeping pure the portion of divine spirit within. If by persuasion he can reform others, good; but if he cannot, it must rest there, and is doubtless right in the rational order of the whole. How incompatible this was, if taken by itself and logically carried out, with the duties of a Roman emperor, Dr. Bussell shows; but, of course, he is obliged to admit that Marcus devoted himself conscientiously to the performance of those duties. It is really to the credit of the emperor's sincerity, he observes, that so many incompatible positions are to be found in his "Thoughts," noted down without any attempt at consistency or symmetry; but

the author himself clearly holds that this Buddhistic teaching was the genuine outcome of Greek philosophy, and the final expression of its 'intellectualist' attitude to the world.

One special position, I think, he has distinctly made out; and that is, the close approximation of Marcus to the idealism and mysticism of the Neo-Platonists. Yet here, though he recognizes, in a general way, the logical superiority of the later school, he never points out precisely where the difference lay. In reality, the idealism which with the Platonizing Stoics was only a sentiment, was by Plotinus scientifically founded. The last of the Stoics is still compelled to speak of the soul as a 'vital spark,' a portion of the elemental 'fire' or 'breath.' In the Neo-Platonic system, it is strictly defined as unextended being, and no longer confused with some finer kind of matter.

The general question, however, arises, in relation not only to the latest schools, but to all: Was the outcome always essentially 'quietism'? Dr. Bussell holds that it was so from the first. The philosophy of Ionia, because it sprang up at the point of contact between the Hellenic and the Eastern worlds, "cannot be called a native product of Greek soil" (pp. 18-19). To be this, we are tempted to ask, ought it to have sprung up in Laconia or Arcadia? Could the Greeks bring out their distinctive thought only in the absence of contact with foreigners? Are we to have Protectionism in history? "Philosophy," he goes on, "in its birth is essentially Romantic; and subjective impressions take the place of exterior law." How curious then that it should have anticipated the fundamental principle of objective science, which is still *Ex nihilo nihil.* And, in fact, when we come to consider it, we can see that Dr. Bussell's generalization here is explicitly wrong, if he takes Greek philosophy to have either begun or ended in the passivity which we call 'Oriental,' because this has been the character of some Asiatic thought. If 'activity' is the character of the West, then Greek philosophy was preëminently Western. At its beginning in Ionia, it was closely connected with active scientific research. At Athens its association was at first equally close with the activities of politics and the law courts. Its abstention from concrete business was only part of the rational division of labor required if theorizing was to be done at all. The greater detachment, brought on compulsorily by the decline of the city state, was compatible in the Epicureans with warfare on pop-

ular superstition, and in the Stoics with a profound influence on something so practical as Roman law. The Cynic, who has been compared to the Christian monk, really made it his social function to be a sort of Socratic 'gad-fly.' And the Neo-Platonists, mystics as they were, succeeded in overcoming a certain emptiness which (I quite agree with Dr. Bussell) gave a tinge of melancholy to the life of the Stoic sage. This emptiness was in part due to the depreciation of intellectual culture in an exclusively ethical interest. Moral law, when it is conceived as a law concerning no content at all, ceases to have a real meaning. One thing that the Neo-Platonists did was to restore the ideal of the theoretic life as a source of happiness. And this life did not mean barren contemplation of the perpetual flux of things as to a certain extent it does in the more speculative passages of Aurelius; but, as in Aristotle, implied a whole structure of social life and systematized scientific investigation. And when the school had worked out to exhaustion its distinctive metaphysical ideas, its last teachers, turning back to Aristotle, passed on the tradition of the sciences of nature through the Arabians to the Christian Scholastics and thence to modern Europe. Even the Pyrrhonic Skeptics, it is worth noting, bear the impress which we agree to call that of the West. Dr. Bussell no doubt remembers how Sextus Empiricus argues that the Skeptic will act, though there is no scientific demonstration that one mode of action is better than another, because not to do anything would be tedious. In his actions, having no rational criterion, he will take as his standard the customs followed by sensible men of the world.

This may be taken as a general correction of Dr. Bussell's somewhat special point of view; but there is something more to say. The undoubtedly pessimistic tone of thought in the earlier Empire was not wholly the result of a one-sided philosophy, but was in part the expression of a sense, sometimes clearer and sometimes obscurer, that the world of ancient culture was in decadence at the centers of its life, and that the practical problem of the statesman was in the main to check a decline of which the end was inevitable. This raises the question of Dr. Bussell's political presuppositions, which are indicated in his very lively first two chapters. With these I propose to deal in the remainder of this notice; referring only for illustration to the latter part of the book.

Dr. Bussell does justice to the Roman Empire as a system worked out with high intelligence and conscience to provide for the ordered life and material good of the mass of mankind. With genuine impartiality he remarks that "Rome, unfairly weighted with the odium of the Ten Persecutions of the Christians, is yet the first state that discovered and practised religious tolerance" (p. 9). He also insists on a certain fundamentally republican character that always remained in the ancient polity. There is, no doubt, some exaggeration when he says that Augustus could not have foreseen that his own Empire would become an ideal; and that the modern monarch's titles of honor were utterly lacking. Augustus did much to direct the idealization of his monarchy by the poets of his age; and among his titles of honor found in Greek inscriptions are those of Autocrat, High Priest, and God. Nevertheless, the contrast drawn by Dr. Bussell is broadly true. "'The King can do no wrong'; *'Le roi est mort! Vive le roi'!* are two ideas which lie [? not long since lay] at the background of the stability of Europe, and are by no means mere sentiments or convenient fictions of the law. Yet they involve ideas which a Roman in the most servile period would have repudiated with scorn" (p. 3). Compare page 126, note: "For the ideal was still republican, impersonal, abstract; whereas to-day our interest frankly centers round our First Family, by right of immemorial lineage." Again, page 5: "From one brief but pregnant sentence of Tacitus we gather the remarkable difference between the aristocratic modern world of to-day and the democracy of the classical peoples: *'Reges ex nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt'* ("Germania," 7). "It is not too much to say," he continues, "that to the acute observer, who refuses to be deceived by the harmless and necessary turmoil of democratic legislation and reform, European Society, [mark the capital!] in its firm loyalty to monarchs who are 'born not made,' to a governing class that is never a bureaucracy, and to the laws of succession and property, relies for its surest foundations on the hereditary principle. And this, just because the people are free, and with their instinctive good sense prefer to place power in those whose past traditions are a guarantee of confidence and good faith, and who breathe a purer air of patriotism and disinterestedness, apart from the narrow conservatism of officialdom and the intrigues of professional politicians."

It seems extraordinary, and in reading some passages I am tempted to think it is 'only his fun,' that a writer with the impersonal insight to see and describe the features of a higher type should, apparently from some personal prejudice, be attached to the lower, and thus collapse into what is, on the whole, merely a eulogistic account of the politics of the snob. Compare another passage, where he dwells with complacency on the quiescence to-day of "anything approaching educated republicanism" (pp. 25, 26). From a broadly historical point of view, the reason of the contrast so far as it exists is plain. On 'the way down' (from the Athens of Pericles and from republican Rome) the old forms and modes of thought long survived, till at last they became a shell, while kingship was returning from the East. On 'the way up' (from the consummation of the Roman decadence) the reverence for the king by divine right, the *deus in terris* of the consecrated barbarian monarchies, survives as a type of sentiment both in higher and lower social strata, though the effective political interests (as I venture to think) have gone elsewhere.

As little as he allows it in Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius can the claim to consistency be allowed in Dr. Bussell himself. With the line so far taken it is quite consistent that he should display ostentatious respect for the government of Russia and contempt for that of France (p. 8), though both are admitted to rest on popular consent. To speak of "countries essentially democratic, such as France, Russia, China, the United States" (p. 125) is deliberate paradox with a grain of truth in it. When, however, he remarks incidentally, as if accepting the antithesis, on "the subservience of a once aristocratic world to democratic Christianity" (p. 164), and on the opposition between "Secular Science and Christian Democracy" (p. 165), he seems to be approaching sheer contradiction of what he said before on the relatively democratic character of the classical world. And while Epictetus and Aurelius are usually treated as culminating instances of the tendency of "Philosophy, that dangerous and seductive foe of the Common Life" (p. 16) to Oriental quietism, they are, on the other hand, in their occasional reflections on the futility of political action as compared with the prior task of correcting one's own character, made to point a sneer against all active attempts to reform our modern world. "What would our liberals say to the de-

thronement of their noble Discontent?'' (p 180.) Finally the attempt to fuse contradictions runs into an incoherence like this: ''Louis XVI, if not an incapable, was a 'philosopher-king'; yet the success of that unaccountable movement, the French Revolution, was due to his (unconscious) following Marcus's rules'' (pp. 183-186).

In this instance the usual brilliancy and point of the writing fail through straining; but in general the contradictions and overstatements of the book are merely the faults that accompany these qualities. It has been written in close contact with the facts; and the somewhat eccentric point of view (for a philosopher) gives it suggestiveness. Not to fail on my side in candor, I will state my own taste or perhaps counter-prejudice on the merits of the political contrast drawn between the ancient and the modern worlds. Here I think Dr. Bussell's distinctive paradox is sounder than the commonplace he perhaps inadvertently accepts elsewhere. ''The Roman Empire, in spite of the plutocratic basis of society and taxation, was far more democratic in its temper and its possibility than we shall see Europe in our lifetime'' (p. 126). This was, of course, consistent with a kind of aristocracy, as it was called by ancient philosophers, though modern usage often calls it democracy, namely, selection by merit. Another idea of aristocracy formulated by the ancients was the notion of a natural superiority of race. Aristotle said, for example, that a superiority in physical beauty not greater than that of the gods, as compared with ordinary mortals, would be thought to confer on the race that possessed it a right to rule. This too, from its resemblance to the idea of merit, seems to have a kinship with rational democracy as contrasted with the aristocracy of mere institution which Dr. Bussell, no doubt rightly in the main, takes to be that of the Middle Ages, continued into modern times. Whatever kind of natural selection may have produced the actual ruling classes, the theory of their authority became one of delegation in theocratic form. They were not God-descended, like the ancient ruling races; but the anointed king, 'the deputy elected by the Lord,' conveyed, as the 'fountain of honor' the descending degrees of nobility. Now this idea was easily applied to consecrate what Renan calls the naïve Teutonic acceptance of the rights of birth, which he expressly contrasts with the idea of selection predominant in the time of

the Antonines. How naïve this notion of birth was we may see in Tacitus, from whom we learn that, among the German tribes, nobles, ordinary freemen, and slaves were indistinguishable as regards culture. The result of the theocratic idea superimposed on this may be seen in a monarch like the Tsar Alexander III, who, while recognizing that he had only the intellect of a peasant, could yet resolve to 'do his duty' (as tyrant and persecutor) because his position as autocrat was conferred by God. Compared with this, the "*Qualis artifex pereo*" of Nero seems to me relatively noble. And I immeasurably prefer Philip II and Alexander III of Macedon to Philip II of Spain and Alexander III of Russia. Yet may we not add that the best ancient and modern thought agrees in making socially supreme an ideal of equal impersonal justice as a norm under which even the highest natural powers are to be exercised? If Dr. Bussell had cared, he might have found this, and not merely the struggle to remain personally uncontaminated, in Marcus Aurelius.

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THE STORY OF THE BIBLE. From the Standpoint of Modern Scholarship. By Walter L. Sheldon. Second Edition. S. Burns Weston, 1415 Locust Street, Philadelphia, Pa., 1909. Pp. 187.

Mr. Sheldon had a rare capacity for making things plain. As lecturer of the Ethical Society of St. Louis for more than twenty years, he covered an astonishingly wide range of topics. But whether he dealt with the Bible or Dante, with Aristotle or Spencer, he always knew how to extract the meat and to give, in a simple and effective manner, what he felt that men were most in need of. He had little taste for subtle distinctions, minutiæ of criticism, chronological details, or elaborated elegancies of style. He saw things in the large and took his hearers to the heart of every subject he treated. Everywhere he searched for the moral value; and when he found it, he set it forth interestingly and impressively. Mr. Sheldon had a great love for the Bible. His "Bible Stories for Children" is an admirable book; and his "Life of Jesus for Children" tells the wondrous tale with sympathy and insight.